

HOMICIDE

IN CALIFORNIA
2003



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Division of California Justice Information Services
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CRIMINAL JUSTICE STATISTICS CENTER

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HOMICIDE IN CALIFORNIA, 2003

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The role of the Criminal Justice Statistics Center is to:

- Collect, analyze, and report statistical data which provide valid measures of crime and the criminal justice process.
- Examine these data on an ongoing basis to better describe crime and the criminal justice system.
- Promote the responsible presentation and use of crime statistics.

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Homicide in California, 2003 contains information about the crime of homicide and its victims, demographic data on persons arrested for homicide, and information about the response of the criminal justice system. Information about the death penalty, the number of peace officers killed in the line of duty, and justifiable homicide is also included. Additionally, in response to interest in domestic violence, this year's edition of *Homicide in California* includes an expanded analysis of domestic violence-related homicide (see Pages 21 through 23).

Information displayed in this publication comes from several databases maintained by the California Department of Justice (DOJ). The primary source of information is the Homicide File, which captures willful and justifiable homicide crime data. Other databases capture information about persons arrested for homicide, death penalty sentences, and peace officers killed in the line of duty. The reader should consider that the type of data collected, and the methods used to collect these data, differ for each data set. *Unless otherwise indicated, all calculations are based on the number of known incidents.*

To provide the most valid data possible, the disposition section of this report has been removed. In 2001, Criminal Justice Statistics Center (CJSC) staff determined that a number of homicide arrests submitted to the DOJ's Automated Criminal History System (from which adult felony arrest disposition data are extracted) from 1997 to 2001 should have been submitted as arrests for attempted homicide. In addition, some correctly submitted attempted homicide arrests were programmatically treated as homicide arrests. As a result, more homicide arrests were counted during these years than occurred. This caused the percentage of homicide convictions to be too low and the percentage of assault convictions to be too high. (Both percentages were based on the number of adult felony arrests for homicide for which dispositions were received.) Based on CJSC staff findings, the reader is advised against using previously published disposition data from 1997 to 1999. It should be noted that the DOJ has addressed this issue and that the exclusion of disposition data does not affect crime, arrest, death penalty, nor other data included in this or past reports. When homicide disposition data are once again determined to be accurate, they will be included in this publication.

CJSC publications available in either printed or electronic format (via the Attorney General's website) are listed on the inside of the back cover. Customized statistical reports or additional statistical information may be requested by contacting the CJSC at the numbers or addresses provided there.

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HIGHLIGHTS



HOMICIDE CRIMES (see pages 2-23)

- ✓ From 1994 to 2003, the homicide crime rate decreased 41.7 percent (11.5 to 6.7). From 2002 to 2003, homicide crimes decreased 1.5 percent in rate per 100,000 population (6.8 to 6.7). (Source: Table 1.)
- ✓ From 2002 to 2003, homicide rates decreased for females, Hispanics, and blacks. Hispanics experienced the largest decline in rate (down 4.3 percent). (Sources: Tables 2 and 3.)
- ✓ In 2003, the percentage of white homicide victims who were female was over twice the percentage of Hispanic or black female victims. White victims also tended to be older, Hispanic and black victims, younger. (Sources: Tables 8 and 9.)
- ✓ From 2002 to 2003, the number of homicide victims killed by friends or acquaintances decreased 9.4 percent. The number of victims killed by strangers also decreased (14.0 percent). (Source: Table 11.)
- ✓ In 2003, almost 25 percent of all female homicide victims were killed by their spouses. In contrast, less than 1.5 percent of male victims were killed by theirs. (Source: Table 12.)
- ✓ Of the 35 counties for which 2003 homicide rates were calculated, Los Angeles County experienced the highest rate per 100,000 population (10.5); Marin County experienced the lowest (0.0). (Source: Table 14.)
- ✓ From 1994 to 2003, the average number of homicides committed during the summer exceeded the average number committed during any other season. (Source: Table 15.)
- ✓ On average, 72.3 percent of homicides committed from 1994 to 2003 were committed with firearms. Additionally, the proportionality of firearm and non-firearm weapons usage in homicide crimes during this period remained relatively stable. (Source: Table 21.)
- ✓ In 2003, one-third of homicides were gang-related. (Source: Table 24.)
- ✓ In 2003, the percentage of females killed in domestic violence-related homicides was over 19.5 times that of males (41.0 vs. 2.1 percent). (Source: Table 25.)
- ✓ On average, 56.5 percent of homicides were cleared by an arrest or by "exceptional means" from 1994 to 2003. (Source: Table 28.)

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HOMICIDE ARRESTS (see pages 26-29)

- ✓ From 1994 to 2003, the homicide arrest rate decreased 45.0 percent (12.0 to 6.6). From 2002 to 2003, homicide arrests decreased 2.9 percent in rate per 100,000 population at risk (6.8 to 6.6). (Source: Table 29.)
- ✓ From 1994 to 2003, the overwhelming majority of homicide arrestees and victims were male. (Sources: Tables 5 and 30.)
- ✓ From 1994 to 2003, the largest percentage of homicide arrestees and victims were Hispanic. (Sources: Tables 6 and 31.)
- ✓ From 1994 to 2003, the largest percentage of homicide arrestees and victims were aged 18-29. (Sources: Tables 7 and 32.)

DEATH PENALTY SENTENCES (see pages 32-33)

- ✓ By the end of 2003, there were 639 persons under sentence of death in California. Of these, 22 were sentenced in 2003. (Source: Table 35.)

PEACE OFFICERS KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY (see pages 36-37)

- ✓ Since 1994, there have been 60 peace officers feloniously killed in the line of duty. Six were killed in 2003. (Source: Table N-2.)
- ✓ Between 1994 and 2003, the homicide rate for peace officers killed in the line of duty varied from 2.9 to 16.1 per 100,000 sworn law enforcement personnel. (Source: Table 37.)

To Crimes -->